

Washington, DC – After the adoption or birth of a child, federal employees currently receive only 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave, making the United States the only industrialized nation which does not provide income support for new parents. Congressman Joe Sestak (PA – 07) cosponsored and voted in favor of the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (H.R. 626) to provide four weeks of paid parental leave for both male and female federal employees. The bill passed 258-154.

“This bill doesn’t only make sense for parents and children but also for the efficiency of the federal government,” said Congressman Sestak. “Providing paid leave for a new parent costs the government less than half as much as it would to replace them. New parents who have access to leave when their first child is born are more likely to stay with their employer than those who do not.”

It costs about 20 percent of an employee’s salary to hire and train new workers when there is turnover, compared with only 8 percent to provide an existing, experienced employee with four weeks of paid leave. Therefore, paid paternal leave saves money by increasing productivity and reducing turnover.

Currently, federal law offers no paid leave to care for an infant or newly adopted child and dictates that employees must demonstrate a personal medical problem to use their sick leave. In contrast, 75 percent of Fortune 100 Companies provide paid leave to new mothers with a median length of six to eight weeks. In addition to four weeks of paid parental leave, this bill allows new parents to use any accrued annual or sick leave for up to eight weeks. It also authorizes the Office of Personnel Management to extend the paid parental leave period for up to eight weeks. These new provisions, which emphasize that men and women are treated equally, are important in part because government-sponsored day care facilities usually do not care for infants younger than 10 to 12 weeks old.

Congressman Sestak noted that it is particularly critical to attract young workers as the federal workforce is aging, increasing from 43.6 to 46.7 between 1994 and 2004.

“With the rising cost of food, gas and other necessities it is wrong for the federal government to take away the paycheck from someone who is forced to take time off because of a new child,” said Congressman Sestak. “We can’t expect to reverse the trend of young workers leaving

without enacting more family-friendly policies like this one.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

###